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SPAIN AND THE WESTERN ALLIANCE

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN SEES SPAIN'S INCIPIENT TREND TOWARD DEMOCRATIC REFORM AND THE JUST-CONCLUDED TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES AS STRENGTHENING THE WESTERN ALLIANCE.

VOICE: BOTH DEVELOPMENTS COME AT A TIME WHEN THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION IS TROUBLED BY THE SITUATION IN ITS SOUTHERN FLANK--THE MEDITERRANEAN. AT ITS EASTERN END, THE SMOLDERING QUARREL BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY OVER CYPRUS HAS UNQUESTIONABLY AFFECTED NATO DEFENSE PLANS FOR THAT SECTOR.

THE SITUATION IN THE WESTERN END OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK HAS IMPROVED APPRECIABLY WITH THE APPARENT EMERGENCE OF PORTUGAL FROM INSTABILITY AND NEAR-CHAOS, AS MODERATE ELEMENTS MOVE THE COUNTRY AHEAD TOWARD A STABLE DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION. BUT THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION, AS SOCIALIST LEADER MARIO SOARES INDICANED TO A NATIONAL PRESS CLUB AUDIENCE TUESDAY HERE IN WASHINGTON, STILL BEARS WATCHING.

IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT THE MILITARY PORTIONS OF THE TREATY SIGNED BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN HAVE ACQUIRED AN IMPORTANCE GREATER THAN THEIR BILATERAL NATURE. SPAIN'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO ANY DEFENSE OF WESTERN EUROPE HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED BY MILITARY EXPERTS EVERYWHERE. AND THE TREATY UNQUESTIONABLY BRINGS SPAIN MORE INTO THE DEFENSE EQUATIONS OF NATO PLANNERS. UNDER THE TREATY THE UNITED STATES COMMITS ITSELF TO HELP MODERNIZE SPAIN'S ARMED FORCES. AND SPAIN AGREES TO THE CONTINUED USE BY THE UNITED STATES OF VITALLY IMPORTANT AIR AND SEA FACILITIES. MOREOVER, UNDER THE TREATY, BOTH PARTIES WILL SEEK TO HARMONIZE THEIR DEFENSE

RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE WEST. ACCORDINGLY, SPANISH DEFENSE PLANS WILL BE COORDINATED WITH THOSE OF THE REST OF THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ARRANGEMENT HAS NOT BEEN LOST ON SOME WEST EUROPEAN NEWSPAPERS--PUBLISHED IN COUNTRIES THAT HITHERTO HAVE OPPOSED CLOSE NATO LINKS WITH SPAIN. AN EXAMPLE IS THIS COMMENT FROM LE MONDE, AN INDEPENDENT-LEFT PARISIAN DAILY. IT SAID THE U.S.-SPANISH TREATY FOR THE FIRST TIME RECOGNIZED THE PARTICIPATION OF SPAIN IN "THE DEFENSE OF THE WEST." AND ANOTHER FRENCH NEWSPAPER--THE FINANCIAL, LES ECHOS, ASKED: "IS THIS AT LAST THE DECISIVE TURN THAT WILL COMMIT SPAIN TO EVOLVE TOWARD A PARLIAMENTARY, DEMOCRATIC REGIME?" AND IN NORWAY, LONG AN OPPONENT OF NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR SPAIN AS LONG AS IT HAD A TOTALITARIAN REGIME, AFTENPOSTEN COMMENTED: "WE MUST NOT BE NEGATIVE TO THE VERY IDEA OF SPANISH NATO MEMBERSHIP, AND WE MUST BE PLEASED IF SPAIN SHOWS GOOD WILL AND SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRACY..."

SIGNIFICANTLY, THESE COMMENTS FROM THE WESTERN PRESS CAME PRIOR TO THE DECISION OF SPAIN'S COUNCIL OF THE REALM THIS WEEK TO PUT OFF FOR A YEAR NEW PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. THE PURPOSE OF THE DELAY IS TO PREPARE THE SPANISH ELECTORATE FOR ORDERLY, FREE BALLOTTING FOR REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRATIC BODIES. THAT EVENT, IN ITSELF, SHOULD GO FAR TOWARD BOLSTERING THE WESTERN WORLD'S HOPES THAT BEFORE TOO LONG SPAIN WILL RE-ENTER EUROPE AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF COLLECTIVE WESTERN DEFENSES.

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